

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BAGHDA 01864 171223Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 MCT-01 CAB-02 COME-00 DOTE-00
EB-07 CIEP-01 FAA-00 SY-05 SCS-03 SCA-01 A-01 OMB-01
OC-06 CCO-00 USSS-00 DHA-02 IO-13 /093 W
----- 043150 /17

O 171200Z DEC 76
FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3921
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T BAGHDAD 1864

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PINT IZ
SUBJECT: BOMBING OF BAGHDAD AIRPORT

REF: BAGHDAD 1853 (NOTAL)

1. USUALLY WELL INFORMED USINT SOURCE TOLD USINT ON EVENING OF DECEMBER 15 THAT CASUALTY LIST FROM AIRPORT EXPLOSION IS NOW THREE DEAD, TEN CRITICALLY INJURED AND MORE THAN 100 HOSPITALIZED WITH LESSER INJURIES. ACCORDING TO SOURCE, ALL OF THE DEAD AND CRITICALLY INJURED ARE IRAQIS AND SAUDIS. ACCORDING TO BAGHDAD OBSERVER THE DEAD SAUDI IS THE SON OF THE SAUDI CONSUL IN BASRA. LESSER INJURED INCLUDE JAPANESE, GREEKS, LEBANESE, KUWAITIS, FRENCH, GERMANS, PALESTINIANS, EGYPTIANS, IRAQIS AND SAUDIS. NO U.S. CITIZENS WERE HARMED. OTHER SOURCES TOLD US THAT THERE WERE EGYPTIANS AMONG THE SERIOUSLY INJURED.

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2. SOURCE ALSO SAID THAT GOI HAD ASCERTAINED THAT SUITCASE WITH EXPLOSIVES DID NOT BELONG TO ANY OF THE PASSENGERS. HE SAID THAT EXPLOSIVES HAD BEEN PUT ON BOARD EGYPTIAN AIRLINES PLANE IN DAMASCUS BY SYRIAN OFFICIALS AND TIMED TO EXPLODE 15 MINUTES AFTER PLANE LANDED IN BAGHDAD. FROM EFFECTS OF THE BLAST GOI HAD

CONCLUDED THAT SUITCASE CONTAINED 7 OR 8 KILOS OF TROTINE.

3. SOURCE SAID THAT ALL FLIGHTS BETWEEN BAGHDAD AND DAMASCUS WOULD NOW BE HALTED AND THAT SYRIAN-IRAQI BORDER HAS BEEN TEMPORARILY CLOSED.

4. I ASKED SOURCE HOW GOI KNEW THAT SYRIAN OFFICIALS WERE INVOLVED SINCE ANYONE COULD BUY A TICKET, CHECK HIS BAG FOR THE FLIGHT, AND THEN DISAPPEAR. SOURCE SAID THAT OPERATION WAS VERY SOPHISTICATED AND BESIDES IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO CARRY EXPLOSIVES THROUGH TIGHT SECURITY AT DAMASCUS AIRPORT WITHOUT OFFICIAL COOPERATION.

5. BOEING TEAM CHIEF WALKED AROUND AIRPORT BUILDING ON DECEMBER 15 AND SAID THAT ENTIRE SIDE OF BUILDING HAD BEEN BLOWN OUT AND ROOF WAS SAGGING. HE THOUGHT THAT BUILDING MAY NOW HAVE TO BE DECLARED STRUCTURALLY UNSAFE.

6. BAGHDAD TELEVISION SHOWED EXTENSIVE SCENES OF DAMAGED BUILDING AND OF INJURED HOSPITAL PATIENTS DURING EVENING OF DECEMBER 15. MANY PATIENTS HAD BANDAGES OVER BOTH EYES AND EXTENSIVE SURFACE WOUNDS, APPARENTLY FROM FLYING GLASS.

7. BAGHDAD AIRPORT CONTINUED TO FUNCTION DECEMBER 15, BUT TERMINAL BUILDING WAS WITHOUT POWER OR TELEX. ALL IRAQI AIRLINES FLIGHTS SCHEDULED TO DEPART THAT
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DAY DID SO, BUT SOME WERE 3 TO 5 HOURS LATE. PASSENGERS ARE NOW BEING CHECKED IN AND OUT AT OLD AIRPORT AND THEN TAKEN BY BUS TO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. SADDAM HUSSEIN RETURNED FROM ALGIERS ON EVENING OF APRIL 15 AND LANDED AT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. HE WAS RECEIVED AT PLANE AND IN VIP LOUNGE BY USUAL ASSORTMENT OF SENIOR OFFICIALS AND AMBASSADORS. ARRIVAL SCENES WERE CARRIED ON BAGHDAD TELEVISION AS USUAL.

8. COMMENT: GOI WILL OBVIOUSLY MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO PIN BLAME ON SYRIAN REGIME WHETHER OR NOT THEY WERE RESPONSIBLE. IN MY VIEW, MOST LIKELY EXPLANATION IS THAT RESPONSIBLE PARTIES WERE ANTI-IRAQI REGIME ELEMENTS WITHIN BAATH PARTY, MOST LIKELY SYRIANS OR DISAFFECTED IRAQIS, WHO WERE RETALIATING AGAINST RECENT IRAQI INSPIRED TERRORISM IN SYRIA. IN THIS CASE, HOWEVER, TERRORISM WAS DIRECTED AT RANDOM AIRPORT CROWDS RATHER THAN OFFICIALS OF RIVAL REGIME.

SINCE THIS TYPE OF RANDOM KILLING, EVEN IN ARAB WORLD,
IS GENERALLY CONDEMNED, IT RAISES SERIOUS QUESTIONS
IN MY MIND WHETHER SYRIAN REGIME WAS IN FACT INVOLVED.
I WOULD NOT RULE OUT POSSIBILITY THAT OPERATION
WAS CARRIED OUT BY ANTI-SYRIAN ELEMENTS IN IRAQ AS
A MEANS OF BLACKENING THE IMAGE OF THE SYRIAN REGIME
AND JUSTIFYING FURTHER TERRORIST ACTS AGAINST SYRIANS.
WILEY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AIRPORTS, EXPLOSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: SmithRJ
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BAGHDA01864
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X3
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760464-0748
From: BAGHDAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761231/aaaabajv.tel
Line Count: 123
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 BAGHDAD 1853
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: SmithRJ
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 JUN 2004 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <07 OCT 2004 by SmithRJ>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BOMBING OF BAGHDAD AIRPORT
TAGS: PINT, IZ
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006